

The Athenian Mercury.

Tuesday, January 28. 1695.

Quest. 1. **I**N the 3d of Dan. and the 25 v. after Nebuchadnezzar had caus'd the three chil-
dren to be cast into the Fiery Furnace,
he says. "Loe I see four men loose,
" walking in the midst of the Fire, and
" they have no hurt, and the Form of the 4th is like
" the Son of God. Pray whom did Nebuchadnezzar
mean by the Son of God, and if our blessed Saviour, how
came this Heathen to have more knowledge of him than the
Jews themselves had before his coming?

Answe. That the ancient Learned Heathens, long enough before Christianity came into the world generally asserted and believed one Supreme Deity, and even a Trinity in the Divinity, is demonstrable and undeniable, and has been render'd so by the very learned Dr. Cudworth, which we'd fain see either the *Atheists* or *Antitrinitarians* attempt to *answer*. This was a part of their *Cabala*, the height of their *Traditional Learning*, deliver'd from Father to Son, and doubtless receiv'd from the *Patriarchs* and first planters of the world; and that among others the ancient *Jews* had clear and undeniable *Notions* of these matters wou'd be easy to prove, contrary to the opinion of the *Querist*, were their room for't at present which perhaps we may do in some other place. As for *Nebuchadnezzar*, being so great a Prince, 'tis no doubt but he was veri in the *Religion* and *Learning* of his Country, as the *Persian Kings* were afterwards, it may be more than any others: Now we can prove that the *Chaldeans*, or *ancient Magi* did own a *Trinity*, consequently a *Son of God*. First from *Pythagoras*, who clearly acknowledges it, and is known to have liv'd amongst 'em, and to have had a great part of his *Learning* from them. Secondly, from the *Chaldaic Oracles* the *Ιερὰ Λόγια* mention'd and commented upon by *Hierocles*, *Damascius*, *Porphyry* and other Heathens, therefore not forg'd by Christians and these affirm, that the whole world was made by three, and that a *Trinity*, whose head was an *Unity*, shines through all things. But supposing all this shou'd be doubted, what follows wou'd set it, we think, beyond *Contradiction*: For they call'd the three in this their *Trinity*, *Oromasdes*, *Mithras*, and *Arimanes*, or *Arcinarius*, as has been observ'd by *Vossius*, and several others, each of which they believ'd to be *God*, to be *omnipotent*, and to have had a *Hand* in the *Creation* of all things. This is positively enough asserted by *Plutarch*, who tells us, "Zoroaster made a *Threefold Distinction* of things, that he assign'd the first and highest rank to *Oromasdes*, who in the *Oracles* is call'd the *Father*, the lowest to *Arimanes*, and the middle to *Mithras* who is call'd the *Second mind*. And upon this *Plutarch* himself observes how great an agreement there is between the *Trinity* of *Plato* and *Zoroaster*, and that they differ only in *words*. Nay, he goes further, and says that the *Persians* from this *Mithras* were us'd to call any *Mediator* by the same name. We own they often understood the *Sun* by *Mithras*, but that they had also a *higher notion* of him, and made him the *same* with *Oromasdes* we shall anon show, whom they asserted as far above the *Sun* as the *Sun* was above the *Earth*, and yet they gave the Title of *Omnipotent* to *Mithras*, and call him *περιτος θεος* the *First God*, and yet more, *The Maker and Father of all things*, therefore of the *Sun* it self the *Demiurgus*, or *Opificer*, of the world, as *Plato* also made his *Second Principle*, and *ο κρύφιος θεος*, the *secret, or hidden God*, in the same sense with the *Egyptian Ammon*, which cou'd never agree to the *Sun*, who is not only *visible* himself, but makes all things else so. In a word, they

distinguish'd between an *Intelligible* and *visible* *sun*, as is plain in *Julian's Orations*, calling the *second* in their *Trinity* sometimes by the name of the *Sun* (as the Scripture calls our Saviour the *Sun of Righteousness*) which they fancy'd his *Symbol* or *Representation*, as the *Fire* again of that, and yet might own him an *infinite* and *Spiritual* *being* as well as the *Papists* do our Saviour, who represent him by a *Crucifix*, and *worship* him by it.

We foresee only one objection against what we have advanc'd, and that is, that the *Arimanes* of the *Persians* was suppos'd by them to be a *bad God*, the *Original of Evil*, and consequently that *Mithras* was only a *middle God*, or *Mediator* between those two adversary *Gods*. Now that this was *Plutarch's* opinion cannot be deny'd, any more than that 'twas that of *Menes*, the *Father of the Magicians*, if there were really ever any such man, who carries *half the name* of his *God* (as *Belshazzar*, *Nebuchadnezzar*, &c.) in his own. But to this we have to answer, first, that tho this shou'd overthrow their *Trinity*, yet still there wou'd be a *Duality*, a *Mithras*, a *Second mind* or *Principle* (according to their *Theology*), a *Creator of the World*, a *Son of God*; But secondly we shall show in what sense the ancient *Philosophers* did hold *Arimanes*, or this *third* in their *Trinity*, to be *Evil*. They thought he presid'd over *matter*, the lower part of the *Creation*, over all that was *imperfect*, nay many of 'em believ'd *matter* it self to be *Evil*, as doubtless 'tis *imperfect*, and the cause of much *Evil*: And this seems to have been *Plato's* notion of it, as to his *Psyche*, or *Third Principle*, which he makes the *mundane Soul*, or *immediate cause* of all the *motion* in the *World*, and intimately joyn'd and united to *matter*, according to *Pythagoras* his famous opinion of a *Monad* and a *Dyad*, which 'tis true *Plutarch*, or whosoever was the *Author* of the *Placita Philosophorum* thus explains in one place, "that by the *Monad* is meant *God*, by the *Dyad*, a *Demon*, or *Principle of Evil*, according to *Plutarch's* mistaken account of *Zoroaster's* *Divinity* or rather the degenerate *Practice* and *Doctrine* of the *Magi*, his successors, who first came to *Ibewry*, and then to down-right *Witchcraft*, which is so notorious of the *Chaldeans*, that their very names were us'd for *Magicians*, who might easily take the *Devil* for the *Spirit* that ruled and guided the *World* from the very beginning, when they found him in actual *possession*, and acknowledg'd as the *God* of this world. But that the *more ancient notion* was only as we have explain'd it, seems clear from what this same *Author* says of it in another place. "That the *Monad* was an *active principle*, *mind*, or *God*, the *Dyad Passive*, and *matter*: To which was united that *Eternal Psyche* which *Pythagoras* also describes, as *permeating* and *pervading* all things, as his [ο Νόος] *His very mind*, in *Plutarch*, must have been the *second person*, which according to *Plato* had *another above it*. And indeed how cou'd he own a *Tetrachys*, or *Quaternity*, without a *Trinity*, which must as necessarily be included in it as *Three* are in *Four*? Which *Tetrachys*, after all, might be no more than the *Three persons*, (as the Heathens call'd 'em *Principles* distinct from each other, and the *τριθεον* the whole *Divinity*, or *Divine Nature*; consider'd as a *Fourth*, which seems as probable a solution of that *Tetrachys* by which he us'd to *swear*, tho not so *ingenious*, as that of Dr. *Cudworths*, That the *Tetragrammaton* was meant by it, which *Pythagoras* might well learn among the *Jews*, as 'twas afterwards spreaded far and near among the *Heathen Nations*.

But

But we have still further Evidence that the 3d Principle in the *Chaldaic*, or *Zoroastrian Trinity* was not antiently accounted an *Evil Being*, from *Plutarch's own words*, concerning this *Oromasdes*, who he says, did *thrice increase*, or *tripleate himself*, *615 exulting* whereby he explains what he had formerly related: Now if *Oromasdes*, or the *Fountain or Root of the Divine Nature* was thus fruitfully diversify'd, if the first Principle thereof were good; if *Mithras*, the second, who is by *Dionysius* call'd *Triplasios*, or *Threefold*, were as has been prov'd *omnipotent*, and the same with *Oromasdes*, and consequently *Good*, will it not follow that when this *divinity multiply'd* it self into a *third principle* the *same* with *both* the former, that *third* must be also as *good* as either?

The *Sun* is, that a *Trinity in Unity* was an ancient Tradition in the *Chaldaic Learning*: That *Mithras* was the *Second* in this *Trinity*, the *Sun* his *Image*, as the *Fire* the symbol of that. Now *Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Image*, as he did, it's likely, take some *hint* of it from that *Image* which was represented to him in his *Dream*, so 'tis very probable he also represented the *Sun* by it, the usual Idol of the *Babylonians*, whether they call him *Bell*, *Nergal*, or any thing else, as the *Fire* in the *Furnace* we look upon to be no other than the *Symbol* of the *Sun*, one of the *Chammim*, or *perpetual Fires* dedicated to his *service*, in almost all Nations of the world, and remaining some of 'em in *Perisia* and the ancient country to this day, into which 'twas the *custom* to cast those who wou'd not worship the *Sun*, and the *Jews* say *Abraham* himself was serv'd in the same manner by the old *Chaldeans*, who wou'd fain have *burnt* him for a *Heretic*, interpreting that of God's delivering him out of *Ur*, which signifies *Fire*, in a *Literal Sence*: And that this *Fire* was an *usual* thing at their publick Devotions, to the *Sun*, seems pretty plain from its being near the *Image*, in the very place of the assembly, as well as from the *Command* which the King gave, that it shou'd be *Heated Seven times* more than 'twas *wont* to be heated. It seems 'twas *usual* to *heat* it, tho' not so *violently*, and it may be the *Image* and the *Fire* were so *near* each other, that they were to be worshipt *both together*, whence the *Jews* answer'd, we will not serve thy *Gods*, in the plural number, tho' *Elohim* is we confess oftean us'd only for one *God*. Now when *Nebuchadnezzar* saw one of a very glorious appearance, and *Majesty* and *Beauty* far above *humane*, as doubtless had the *Fourth* who was present in the *Furnace*, it's probable enough he might think this was the *Intelligible Sun*, or their *Oromasdes* duplicating himself, appearing in the *2d Principle*, who was describ'd by his Countrymen and Theologers, the *Magi*, or *Chaldeans* as *Porphyry* tells us, in the *Life of Pythagoras*, to be *without* like *Light*, as *within* like *Truth*, and who was believ'd by those *Chaldeans* to be the *Mediator* between matter and spirit, whence 'twas very natural for the King to cry out. "The form" of the fourth is like the *Son of God*.

We shall ask leave to add here another *Conjecture*, that from such *Tradition*, as this it's possible the wise men who came to *salute* and *present* our *Saviour* might have some *kind* of *notice* of him, which if they were *Chaldeans* as many think will be much fairer, or otherwise how shou'd they so readily interpret this *star* to signify his *Birth*, without a *particular Revelation*, which we don't find they had for their *coming*, tho' which was given 'em to direct 'em home again. We shou'd here answer several *Questions* sometimes sent us concerning the pretended *veries* of *Orpheus*, the *Books of Hermes Trismegistus*, The *History of Sanchoniathos*, and one or two more of the same nature, but because such subjects are but for few Readers, we shall defer them to some other *Mercury*. And shall dole this after we have observ'd that all the *Clamor* of the *Arians* and *Sorinians* against the *Orthodox*, as having *taken* their *Trinity* from *Plato*,

(whereby however they own that the *Heathens* did acknowledge such a thing,) it's evident that the *Arrian Trinity*, (for they, we think, own'd the *Holy Ghost*, as well as the *Son* to be *God*) and the *Socinian Duality*, who acknowledge the *Son* to be a *made God*, are much nearer the *Heathenish* and corrupt *Platonical Trinity* than the *nicene Fathers* and the *Church of England*, for we own the *three divine persons Coeternal* together and *Coequal*, whereas the *Platonists* and other *Heathens* believ'd 'em only three *Principles*, *Subordinate* to one another, which is also the opinion of those (we think) mistaken persons here mention'd.

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